



PROPHECY VS. DIVINATION:

The True From the False

ABSTRACT

The greatest problem with the prophetic gift is not that there is or is not one, but the difference between true and false prophecy or 'divination'. This short study examines what the Bible teaches about the characteristics of 'true' vs. 'false' prophecy which is equated with witchcraft and sorcery. The true prophetic utterance flows like water....

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Propheteuo Series: Judah's Glory Bible Studies

Prophecy vs Divination: The True vs. the False

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Introduction:



This is a short interlude into an important topic. One of the aspects of the Mind of Christ which we have not explored in this blog, is that of 'walking in the Spirit' although, in a sense, everything we have spoken of is related directly or indirectly to walking in the Holy Spirit because to have the Mind of Christ formed in you

requires it. The Gifts of the Spirit are fairly well known to most believers:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another [divers] kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. 1Cr 12:8-12

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Church Over the Past 50 years

In the past 50 years [technically 100], perhaps more than any other time in Western Culture, there has been a revival of 'Full' or Complete Gospel Worship: while Churches for centuries kept precepts and general moral commandments and even basic doctrine, sometimes even admirably, the teaching of 'walking in the Holy Spirit' and the outward manifestations of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit was largely neglected [and still is] in mainstream or 'visible' Christianity. With the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements,

sometimes within and sometimes outside traditional denominations, a focus on the gifts was brought back.

The 'movement' [which should not be a movement at all but a general practice] has been fraught with difficulty and division for several reasons. One is that several heresies were allowed to fester with Churches that practiced the gifts in which some went far from Scripture and some more aberrant Churches even claim that with the gifts the scripture is unnecessary, or limited, which is not only heresy but blasphemy. Churches even practicing the gifts, but apart from the firm anchor of the Word of God, got into 'holy laughter' phases, think and grow rich gospels, and a variety of other aberrations.

On the other hand, Churches without any practice of the gifts, or which teach the gifts are dead or for another time or dispensation, are often found to be legalistic, without love and without the power and Grace of God. Some even teach that the outward working of the gifts are demonic, a dangerous and blasphemous position which comes to close to one of the only ways Salvation can be lost which is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which includes attributing the works of God through the Holy Spirit to the demonic.

There is also though, emulations of the things of the Spirit, which can be very deceiving and so that straight and narrow road is vividly required to have a discerning Spirit. A few principles I have found have helped:

Principles

1. ***Never point a finger at what even looks like the works of the Holy Spirit and cry demonic without knowledge or testing the spirits:*** this is too great a risk. One can pray and ask God for discernment, pray and ask Him to prosper the true gifts and thwart the ones which are not true, etc. Too many preachers however in the flesh, not wanting to break with age old ways of doing things in the church of man, cry foul without discernment.

2. ***Go the Word. Always the Word.*** The Holy Spirit who wrote the Word of God over 5000 years through many voices, will not disagree nor depart from the Word in Gifts.

Sometimes, the thing one is given in a word of knowledge, or prophetic utterance may seem a little askance, but recall that prophets and disciples are often asked to do unusual things: stand in the middle of the Gaza desert, for example, or shave off half their beard and scatter it to the wind.

3. Pray, stay in the Word, stand on the Word, and do things decently and in order: God created the universe decently and in order, and His Church is to work that way. If Scripture says that tongues are only "as the Spirit giveth utterance" then it is not self initiated. If it says that an interpreter is to be present, then massive chaotic prayers do not line up, and though they may edify the individual they do not add to faith or build up the Church. Not only are the gifts given and described in scripture, the prescription for their use is given.

Carefulness and caution with prayerful Bible Study are like the guard rails on a steep highway to a mountain top: it's good to get to the 'mountain tops' where we meet with God in fullness, but its good also to have a safe journey upwards! All of this brings us though to the central topic in this section, which is How to discern the veracity of prophetic utterance, or a Word of Knowledge or wisdom from that which is not of the LORD. I have found a few things that will help.

Divination vs Real Prophecy

Perhaps the premiere example in Scripture of the difference between 'Divination' and true gifts, is found in the book of Acts in the case of the young woman who is known for a spirit of divination, off of whom her masters make a lot of money, who when the true apostles appear, begins for 3 days to follow them around saying

"These men are the servants of the Most High God
that shew unto us the way of salvation." Acts 16:17.

The apostles call the wrongful spirit out of the woman which causes her merchandisers much dismay as they lose their free income. As a younger Christian , I wondered at this passage because it seemed that she was saying the truth, these truly were the servants of the Most High God [*El Elyon*], and they really were lifting up Jesus Christ our Messiah

and showing the way of Salvation, so I was earlier unsure why the spirit was 'unclean'. There are few other instances in scripture which mention false prophecy as well, for example, in Jeremiah, around the time Jeremiah prophesies to Zedekiah and Gedaliah, a few local prophets of the time, unhappy with his "doom and destruction" message and call for repentance, take the core of his message and turn it into 'all is well', peace and happiness for Israel. They and others then condemn Jeremiah, and even the princes discuss what to do with the recalcitrant prophet who will not water down or restate the prophecy. Rather than kill him, which they note was done in the past (Jer 44), he is thrown into the dungeon, which is a curious event because even though they are punishing him, the King still sends to hear if he has a Word from the Lord as Babylonian armies march in to destroy Jerusalem! They knew the true from the false but did not like the truth.

To get back for a moment to the first example though, the Spirit of Divination mocked and emulated the true workings of the Holy Spirit and the Scripture rather tightly: but there are a number of differences which are alluded to in scripture which help discern the true from the false.

Definitions:

1. Divination, is called literally in the Greek in this passage the "*Spirit of Python*". By definitions derived from the roots and meaning of the word Python, it bears several characteristics, which the woman who followed after Paul and Silas. It was:

A. **Repetitive**: over and over (ha) without control -it went on for 3 days.

B. **Numerous**

C. **Pressured**. [it is curious that some mental 'illnesses' are characterized by pressured speech, but this is often confused with dialectical concerns]

2. Divination is equated with witchcraft, readings, reading animal 'entrails' casting lots and other things: Joseph in the Old Testament has a 'divining cup'. While some servants of God before the Cross used certain of these practices, it appears not to be the best way, can be harmful and destructive and displeases God. Even the apostles remaining after Judas in choosing a new apostle, use the casting of lots, and get Matthias, but

many feel it was God Himself who really appointed Paul to the last position, because Matthias is not mentioned again after the lot selection. An example of serious divining or witchcraft is when Saul visits the witch of Endor and she reluctantly calls up the 'spirit' or at least the image of Samuel. This is against the law, and the dead do not return to earth outside of a few which God revives, so the sin was serious and resulted in the fall of the house of Saul.

3. Soothsaying, is a form of divination, *qwasam* in Hebrew, and *manteuomai* in the Greek, refers to a form of 'oraclism' which is staccato, given in short and repetitive bursts. It is used definitively in the passages about the young woman in Acts who followed the apostles, who can be seen to bear the repetitive and choppy sayings, but it also involves communicating with the dead [BLB] Saul was to stay away from the Witch of Endor, after he himself outlawed such practices, but desperately went to an occultist after the death of Samuel, because God's wisdom had departed from him. People throughout history have gone to 'soothsayers' or oracles of a false nature to hear what they want to hear: soothsaying seldom involves the truth when it hurts. Soothsaying can also refer to prophets of strange nations. True prophecy again, flows more like a babbling and refreshing brook, is always the truth, always in line with the word, never involves communication with the deceased, is given by the utterance of the Holy Spirit (not man's inquiry or self-produced) and will not lie even to the prophets own hurt.

True Prophetic Utterance and Prophecy

True prophetic utterance often bears a number of characteristics also: it is from the LORD, it is through the Holy Spirit in the way chosen. Several words in scripture are used in connection:

1. *Propheteuo: (Greek)* which according to Strong's refers to "encouraging obedience", foreseeing the future or warning of the future, warning to prepare for the future or admonishing continuing obedience. There are 28 mentions in this form.

2. *Episkiadzo*-this is not directly prophecy and yet it is, it is like an announcement, as when the heralding angels confront the Shepherds in the field, or when the Angel Gabriel overshadows Mary. The key word in English is "overshadowing" or to cloud over: this describes at least the experience of the prophet who usually describes his experience as been overwhelmed, overtaken or the like in a number of words. Daniel

talks about this overshadowing of control (although not the same word) when he confronts an Angel of God who shows him the things of Israel to come.

3. Naba describes the same indicating encouraging, restoration of the Covenant, faithfulness, the telling of future events, or encouraging obedience or the warning against disobedience, only in Hebrew.

4. and **Natap**- (Hebrew) which is used in conjunction, and interestingly coincides with what the voice of God is described as by prophets: to pour down, gently fall, drip, drip words, preach, prophecy, drop, dropped, dropped down or prophesy.

True Prophecy or utterance, has many characteristics which divination and imitations do not, even when the same words are said. To begin with **it is TRUE**, but often not popular, as with Jeremiah. The prophetic encounter, is **often followed by exhaustion**: spiritual and physical---Daniel is so exhausted that he cannot even stand but is picked up and set upright. On a lesser note, many pastors will tell you that after preaching the Gospel, they are not merely tired from a morning's 'work' but often fall asleep, not just napping but in a spiritual exhaustion. Our encounters with the living God **are not mundane!** Our limited existence and physical nature, though made by Him, are so minute next to His Glory that even small tastes of that wondrous fruit depletes our being.

Great Prophecies are often **preceded by intense prayer**, often with **fastings at length, including Repentance**, both individual and corporate: Daniel prays for weeks regarding the sins of Israel, repenting of the very sins which the Prophet Jeremiah and Isaiah and others declared as the reason for captivity 70 years before. Lastly although not exhaustively (we will return later to this topic), as with tongues, prophecies and words of knowledge are under the sovereign direction of God: as the Holy Spirit gives utterance. Forced tongues or prophecies, forced words of wisdom, are often incorrect and quench the Holy Spirit and defy God's sovereignty. I have noted that even in the harshest rebukes God gives us in the Spirit, even for persons gone far into sin, it is most often countered with comfort as one would a straying child.

God is our Parent, our Father, nurturer, and the love of our life. God is Life and Love and Jesus is described as the Way the Truth and the Life, and no man comes to the Father

but by Him! (Jn 14:6). His prophecies and words to us are for our benefit and upbuilding --for our learning and it is one of His ways of "fitting us for Heaven. "

A true prophecy will be in love, even the solid rebuke, because it is so a part of God's nature that it is felt: and His love is so far above ours! We do not treat each other in love that great not even the best of us. His pleadings with Israel in the Babylonian exile to turn back, to repent is like a father who though angry and heartbroken at seeing children walking towards a cliff, begs them, warns them, berates them not to go any farther near the cliff of their destruction. The discernment between true and false prophecy is often not that difficult: though real prophecies may be lengthy, and a few major points repeated, they are not vain repetitions without substance or belief, but the dear and precious calling of Children to walk with a loving God into Eternal Life.

May the Love of the LORD Jesus Christ be with all.

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KEYWORDS & Concepts

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Paul & Silas

Natap

Naba

Episkiadzo

Soothsaying

Witchcraft

“These are the Servants of the Most High God”

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook paper. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

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